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Dream-thoughts on stability, empire, revolution, homeostasis and change, dialectics.

--(Static conception: point in time: "stable equilibrium"):

Empire is a hierarchical arrangement of different states, or of different political entities. (Thus, "they" are "different," but related: hierarchically.)

--(Dynamic conception: process over time: stable in some respects--i.e., unchanging, or "reliably/predictably recurrent," or bounded--but perhaps unstable in others, or under different "disturbances"):

Empire is a dynamically stable hierarchical arrangement of different states or of different political entities (of which one or more is a state).

--Empire is maintained by imperializing. But imperializing is not a "conspiracy" as that is generally conceived. It is neither experienced or practiced as purely self-serving (or mainly self-serving) by those who participate in it most self-consciously, or those who appear to benefit from it most (those whose privileges in the existing system are greatest, and whose privileges are maintained, protected and enlarged by the imperializing practices).

Nor are these imperial practices, or imperializing practices (i.e., practices that are not merely practices "of" empire, but practices that maintain, protect, or expand and strengthen empire) experienced by the practitioners as "choices," chosen from among alternatives that are rejected, or as initiatives, let alone as inventions.

(Thus, they do not convey a sense of personal or group responsibility. Or guilt).

Far from appearing or feeling--in the usual sense of "conspiracy"--like "violations of law," or of social consensus or social order, imperializing activities appear and feel to the practitioners like obedience to commands, to social consensus, to the requirements of social order. Imperializing behavior is felt to be the performance of a valued and necessary social role, whose requirements and characteristics are given by the society, "directed" by the most prestigious and trusted authorities and elites, and more fundamentally, "given" by the nature of the society and its requirements for self-maintenance and health.

This is true even when certain aspects of the performance are covert, concealed by stealth, misdirection and deception from most members of the society. These secrets and lies, too, are felt to be part of the required performance, valued, authorized and required: for the good of, and even (perhaps unconsciously) desired by those "kept in the dark" (as in the case of tact,

discretion, etiquette, consideration, in personal relationships; or fairy tales for children). ("Mommie, tell me the truth: are you the tooth fairy?" "I might be. How would you feel about that?" "I don't know. The tooth fairy was nice.") If certain laws are broken, it is in obedience to "higher laws": still secular ones, within the society.

(Elites are prepared to feel comfortable and accomplished in such complex performances by early membership in "secret societies," like those at Yale. Ask McGeorge Bundy about this; and about relationship of Princeton and Yale to CIA. Has not Domhoff neglected the role in the power structure of secret societies? Note T.E. Lawrence and the Round Table; and the origins of the CFR.) See also the Society of Fellows; ask Kaysen (who was in my dream last night: admitting that he wanted, above all, to be Chairman of the Senior Fellows!)

--Thus, imperializing is "life," it is "what is demanded" of one (of those who practice it most consciously), it is not a "choice." It is a response to incentives that are structured by the society and by "nature, the world, life." It is "the way things are, the way they really are" (once one has graduated from fairy tales). (See Tom Powers' comment on Helms and CIA, in "The Man Who Kept the Secrets": It turns out that our --the public's-- understanding of events and of our democratic system had the nature of a tale told to children).

--An arrangement of "different" entities. Difference here implies "qualitative" difference (or else, boundaries, distance); thus, the conception of empire is "multi-dimensional."

Marx's conception of a dialectical process is dynamic, multi-dimensional, with elements both of stability--homeostasis--and of instability (thresholds, explosions, bursting through boundaries, qualitative change, revolution).

In large part, his analysis of capitalism is that of a complex dynamically stable homeostatic process: adjusting to, feeding on, challenge and change. But is not his conception of revolution ultimately "non-dialectical"? (Just as--as Gouldner suggests--his analysis, or lack of analysis, of revolutionary agents is "non-critical," "non-radical," inattentive to origins, roots, incentives, and "ultimate impact"?) Does it not simply postulate a type of "disturbance" to which the larger system cannot adjust or accomodate, to which it responds "linearly," rigidly: a disturbing element and process which is not itself changed "dialectically" by the conflict and interchange, perhaps in the direction of accomodation? (See, for example, the extent to which "revolutionary states," after they have "succeeded" in establishing themselves, have fitted into the world capitalist system; and/or have exhibited just those fundamental characteristics their elites, as revolutionists, had most denounced and supposedly or consciously sought to change).

Stability implies "constancy" or recurrence, a characteristic or element that does not change, or does not change permanently (it can be relied upon to return, to change back). But this characteristic itself may be a rate of change ("stable growth"); or even a rate of acceleration; or a cyclical movement.

"Explosion," on the other hand, implies instability; and since this need not mean the absence of change or acceleration, it presumably means "unbounded." But then, is any process really "unbounded"? (How about the expanding universe?) Is it not likely to meet barriers, or break-points, thresholds? (See Goodwin's non-linear model of the business cycle).

Marx conceives of revolution--or at least, one of his conceptions of revolution--as an explosion of the capitalist system, due to an "inherent instability." The revolutionary agents are not disturbances from outside, but are generated within the system by its "normal workings." (Alternatively, in the unsuccessful conception of Guevara and Regis Debray, the guerrilla-revolutionists can inject themselves from outside, and then generate processes within the population and the government that shake apart the existing system).

But Marx may simply have underestimated the stability of the capitalist system. Likewise, of empire. Wallerstein's conception of empire (a word he seems seldom to use) or of a world-system is that of a stable, basically homeostatic system (though elements may change places: like electrons shifting orbits or energy levels in quantum theory?). Indeed, he is accused of allowing no place for revolutionary change in the system as a whole. (If so, is this unreal? In any case, he does allow himself to talk of the possibility of socialist transformation of the system as a whole, though he seems unspecific about both the process and the eventual nature of this transformation).